

## **Voters First Advisory Commission**

### **Workshop**

**Tuesday June 26, 2007**

**Room 38, State House**

#### **Commission Members Present:**

**Secretary of State A. Ralph Mollis**

**Senator Juan Pichardo**

**Senator June Gibbs**

**Representative Joseph Almeida**

**Representative Jon Brien**

**Ken McGill, Pawtucket Board of Canvassers**

**Sue Stenhouse, Governor's Deputy Director of Community Relations**

**Roger Harris, RI Vote**

#### **Staff Members Present:**

**Paul Caranci, Deputy Secretary of State**

**Pam Lombardi, Administrative Assistant**

**Chris Barnett, Communications Director**

**Mark Welch, Esquire**

#### **General Public Present:**

**Amy Vitale, ACLU**

#### **Summary of Meeting:**

- 1. Secretary Mollis opened the meeting at 3:00 P.M.**
- 2. Paul Caranci distributed the following handouts for the Commissioners notebooks:**
  - a. Meeting agenda**
  - b. Written comments from:**
    - i. Greg Gerritt (with staff response)**
    - ii. A second comment from Greg Gerritt**
    - iii. Wayne Robinson**
    - iv. Lourdes Mosser**
    - v. Christopher Young – Copy of complaint to US Dept. of Justice**
  - c. NY Times article re: Insane, dementia and related impairments as voting rights**
  - d. ProJo article re: Councilman Luna's proposal for City IDs**
  - e. Alex Moore's comments posted on RI Futures Blog**
  - f. Copy of McConnell Photo ID Amendment to Federal Immigration Legislation**
  - g. Updated Commissioner's list**
- 3. Evaluation of previous and future hearings**
  - a. Commissioner Harris – Feels we should do more to attract individual residents to the hearings in addition to leaders of various interest groups. He believes that some people don't attend because they just don't know and if we advertise/promoted hearings in local papers/radio shows it would be helpful.**
  - b. Commissioner Stenhouse noted that the clapping while speakers testify is disruptive and impedes the Commissioners from hearing entire testimony.**

**c. Senator Pichardo suggested that the Commission take a timer that can be displayed to keep some testimony within the time limits established for each hearing.**

**There was a consensus that each of these items should be implemented.**

**4. Secretary Mollis suggested that the Commission reschedule the hearing currently scheduled for July 23rd because it may conflict with vacation schedules. After discussion, it was agreed that the URI Public Hearing of July 23rd would be rescheduled to Monday, August 20th while the Warwick Public Hearing of August 6th would be rescheduled to Monday, September 10th. (These dates are subject to confirmation based upon site availability.)**

**5. Summary of Issues:**

**a. Paul Caranci distributed a summary matrix of the various topics and issues that have been discussed at the public hearings and/or received as written comments. (Note: Amy Vitale updated the list following the meeting based upon written information she submitted to the Commissioners that Paul Caranci didn't have.)**

**b. Secretary Mollis noted that the Commission has at least 3 options before it:**

**i. Review the issues and add some of them to the 10-point agenda**

**ii. Add all of the new items to the 10-point agenda**

**iii. Add none of the new items to the 10-point agenda**

**c. After discussion, it was decided that the group would review the**

items, add some of the more salient ones to the current 10-point agenda and extend the time of the Commission for another year so as to introduce some of the other items in a 2009 legislative package. During the discussion, Commissioner Harris pointed out that the issues confronting the disability community should not be delayed and should be added to the 2008 legislative agenda. Rep. Brien suggested we stick to the 10-point agenda as much as possible adding only the most pressing issues. Rep. Almeida supports continuing the Commission into next year, but would like to see the Commission develop one legislative package that the majority puts forward. Commissioner Stenhouse suggested that, for the sake of adding credibility to the legislative package, the Commission limit its discussion to only those issues that fall under the auspices of the Secretary of State's Office and weed out those issues that are the responsibility of other agencies. Secretary Mollis pointed out that while some issues are under the domain of another agency, we shouldn't be afraid to discuss them.

6. The Commission discussed the idea of beginning to sort through the issues and start researching information and developing "white papers" on some of the less controversial ones now. After discussion, the following Subcommittees were formed:

a. Weekend Voting (including polling place hours) - This subcommittee will include Commissioners Stenhouse and McGill and will be chaired by Paul Caranci.

b. Voting Booth Privacy – This subcommittee will include Ken McGill and will be chaired by Paul Caranci.

**c. Elimination of Straight Party Ticket – This subcommittee will include Commissioners Gibbs and Stenhouse and will be chaired by Paul Caranci.**

**d. Extension of 50' Canvassing Law – This subcommittee will include Secretary Mollis and Paul Caranci.**

**7. The workshop adjourned at 3:10 P.M.**

**The next Public Hearing is:**

**July 9th @ 6:30 PM**

**Middletown Town Hall**

**350 East Main Road**

**Middletown RI**

**6:30 pm**